



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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By HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

"STEADY, MY TORY FRIENDS."

"Hello, what is going on here?"

It was the middle of the afternoon of a beautiful day in August of the year 1777.

A handsome, bronzed young fellow of perhaps nineteen years was riding along a road in the eastern part of New York State; indeed, he was almost on the line between New York and Vermont, and was in the foothills of the Green Mountains.

He was riding a magnificent black horse, and as the exclamation escaped his lips he reined the animal up, and came to a stop.

Perhaps thirty yards distant was a party of rough-looking, roughly-dressed men, in the midst of whom, his hands tied behind his back, was an Indian.

Who could it mean?

The lone rider asked himself this question, but was unable to answer it.

He was aware of the fact that the Indians, where they took sides in the war at all, were usually to be found on the side of the British—this being the result of being promised much by the redcoats in the way of gold, weapons, ammunition, etc.

If this Indian was an ally of the British, then the chances were that the men who had him a prisoner in their midst were patriots.

If, on the other hand, the Indian was not an ally of the British, then it was possible that the men might be Tories.

The young man on the horse was a noted scout, spy, and fighter, and is well known to the readers of "The Liberty Boys of '76," for he was no other than the redoubtable patriot, and captain of the "Liberty Boys," Dick Slater.

He and his "Liberty Boys" had been sent over to Manchester, Vermont, to be with the force there under General Lincoln, and help retard the advance of the British under Burgoyne.

The youth was now out on a scouting and spying expedition, and he naturally wondered whether the party in question was made up of friends or foes.

Still he was not the youth to hesitate on account of odds, and after having counted the men, and found there were only seven of them, he rode boldly forward, and pausing within a few yards of the party, called out:

"Well, gentlemen, what's all this about?"

At the sound of Dick's voice the Indian started, and gave the youth a quick, sharp glance.

There was an inscrutable look in the Indian's dark eyes, but he did not say anything.

The men whirled and stared at Dick in surprise, when he spoke to them.

Until his voice apprised them of his presence they had not known of his coming.

One of the men, a big, fierce-looking fellow, took upon himself the office of spokesman for the party.

"Who are you?" he growled, frowning.

"A traveler," was the prompt reply.

"A traveler, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then perhaps it would be as well for you to keep right on traveling."

This remark seemed to strike the fellow's comrades as being funny, for they snickered audibly.

"Oh, you think it might be as well for me to keep right on traveling, do you?" remarked Dick, without cracking a smile.

"That's what I said."

"Well, I shall do so—presently."

"Better not delay too long," in a meaning voice.

"Why not?"

"Well, it might be too late, then."

"You mean it would be nightfall, I suppose, and time to go into camp, instead of traveling."

"Yes—into permanent camp."

"For all night, I suppose you mean."

"Yes, and—all next day."

To the men's surprise, the young stranger burst into a peal of laughter.

He seemed to be greatly amused.

The spokesman had been trying to awe or frighten him, but he saw now that he had failed, and he gave the youth a keen, scrutinizing look.

"Say, I'm just beginning to understand," said Dick, in an ironical tone; "you are a humorist—one of those chaps who say funny things, and make people laugh. Ha, ha, ha! I hadn't thought of it before."

"Oh, you hadn't?" The man's tone was sarcastic, and had a threatening ring to it.

"No, but I understand now. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you do."

"Yes."

"Well, you may think so, but—you may find out that you are mistaken, after all."

"Is that so?"

"It is. You may find, before you get through with us, that this isn't so funny as you thought."

"No?"

"Yes."

"Who are you men, anyway?" Dick asked.

"You wish to know who we are, do you?"

"Or I should not have asked."

There was such a peculiar, firm tone to the youth's voice that the man looked at him in surprise.

"I have no objection to telling who we are," he remarked slowly.

"Go ahead and tell me, then."

"We are loyalists."

"Tories, eh?"

"Yes."

"I suspected as much."

"Did you?"

"Yes; but who is the Indian? What has he done?"

"The redskin?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he's a traitor."

"A traitor?"

"Yes."

"What has he done?"

"He promised me that he would join Burgoyne's force, and render him all the assistance in his power."

"Yes?"

"And then he went back on his word."

"He did?"

"He did."

Dick eyed the Indian with interest.

The Indian met his gaze fully, and if the Tories had been close observers, they might have seen that the two exchanged glances of understanding.

"What is your name, redskin?" Dick asked abruptly.

"Injun's name Ramonee."

"Ramonee, eh?"

"Ugh."

"Where do you live—in this part of the country?"

"Part time; part time more south, down by big river."

"Humph. Did you promise these men that you would assist Burgoyne, the British general, and then go back on your word?"

"Ugh. Me prommus."

"Why did you promise if you did not intend keeping your word?"

"White men hol' pistols at Injun's head—say him no prommus, then they shoot. Me prommus—ugh."

Dick smiled.

"That was rather a persuasive argument, for a fact," he said. "So you promised, but did not really intend to keep your word?"

The Indian flashed a quick glance at the Tories, and then nodded his head.

"That it," he admitted.

"You blamed red-skinned rascal," growled the leader of the Tories; "we'll fix you this time."

"Mebby so; mebbly not," said the Indian stoically.

"There isn't any 'mebbly so, mebbly not' about it," in a threatening voice; "we have you here a prisoner, and we are going to settle with you."

"What are you going to do to him?" asked Dick.

"We are going to kill him."

The other Tories nodded their heads, as much as to say, "Yes, that's what we are going to do."

"But don't you think that is going a bit too far?" asked Dick quietly.

"Going too far?" in surprise.

"Yes."

The Tories shook their heads.

"No, I don't think so," said the spokesman.

"Well, I do."

The youth spoke firmly, decidedly.

The Tories stared.

"Oh, you think so, do you?" remarked the spokesman, sarcastically.

"Yes."

"Well, what do you think that amounts to?"

"Well, it may not amount to so very much, but I thought I would express my opinion on the subject."

"Well, you would do better if you were to wait till you're asked to express an opinion."

"Oh, that is the way of it, eh?"

"Yes."

"But that isn't my nature. I never was much of a hand to wait for invitations. I usually take the initiative, and speak right out without waiting."

"Well, it's a wonder to me that you are alive."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; persons who have the habit you say you have always been afflicted with always die young."

"Well, I'm not so very old, even yet."

"True; and the chances seem to be very bright that you may still die young."

"I hope that such will not be the case," drily. "But, by the way, I am going to ask a favor of you."

"A favor?"

"Yes."

"I don't see what right you, an entire stranger, should have to ask a favor."

"Well, I am going to ask it, anyway, right or no right."

"What is the favor that you wish to ask?"

"That you set this Indian free."

The Tories stared in amazement.

Then they burst into a hoarse chorus of laughter.

"So that's the favor you wish to ask, is it?" remarked the spokesman, sarcastically.

"It is."

"And I suppose you think we will grant it?"

"Of course." The reply was prompt and decided.

The Tories stared at the cool youth in wonder, and then the leader exclaimed:

"Well, you are either the greenest chap I have ever seen, or you have the most impudence of anyone I ever ran across."

Dick pretended to look surprised.

"I don't see why you should say that," he said.

"You don't?"

"No; anyone in my position would do as I am doing. I see no reason why you should put this Indian to death, and ask that you release him."

"You may not see any reason why the redskin should be put to death, but we do."

"You will be doing wrong if you put him to death."

"Doing wrong? Ha, ha, ha! Doing wrong in putting a greasy redskin to death? No, we shall be doing a good thing."

"Then you are determined to put him to death?"

"Of course; he forfeited his life when he failed to do

what he promised us he would do."

"But what right had you to make him promise that he would assist the British?"

"Why, all the right in the world."

"I don't see it that way."

The youth spoke firmly, decidedly.

"Oh, you don't eh?" There was an angry look on the Tory's face, an angry intonation to his voice.

"No."

"Well, what do you suppose we care how you look at the matter?"

"You might care a great deal." Dick spoke quietly, but there was a threatening tone to his voice. The Tory noted this, and became very angry.

"Why, you young scoundrel, do you mean to talk saucy to us?" he cried.

"Take it any way you like," retorted Dick.

"Well, then, we accept it as being saucy and threatening talk, and I will say that in my opinion you are a rebel! Such being the case, it becomes our duty to treat you in the same manner as we intend treating the redskin. Seize the rebel, men."

The Tory's comrades started to leap forward, with the evident intention of pulling Dick off his horse, but paused suddenly, as they found themselves staring into the muzzles of two ugly-looking pistols held steady as a rock by Dick's sinewy hands, and heard him say, coolly and calmly:

"Steady, my Tory friends. Don't be in a hurry."

CHAPTER II.

A RESCUE.

The Tories paused, as we have said, and stood still, staring into the muzzles of the pistols with a look of commingled astonishment and fear on their faces.

The Indian watched the scene with interest. Deep down in his dark, beady eyes was a look which betokened delight at the turn affairs had taken.

The spokesman of the Tory gang was the first to find his voice.

"See here; what do you mean, you rebel rascal?" he cried.

"I mean business, you may be sure, you Tory scoundrel," was the prompt retort.

"Don't you call me a Tory scoundrel."

"Then don't call me a rebel rascal."

"Drop those pistols."

The "Liberty Boy" laughed aloud.

"Well, you are an amusing fellow," he said.

"If you don't drop those pistols, you will be sorry."

"I would be very sorry if I were to do so, I imagine."

"You would be saving your life."

"For a few minutes—when you would very kindly relieve me of it."

"We will kill you if you don't drop the pistols."

"Perhaps so; but I can tell you one thing that is absolutely certain, and that is that there will be at least two of you fellows who will die before I do."

"Bah! You would probably miss, if you fired, and then—where would you be?"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but I never miss."

"Oh, you do not?" in a doubting tone.

"Never."

"You are a dead shot, eh?"

"I am a dead shot."

The Tories looked worried, and the two who imagined that the muzzles of the pistols threatened them especially, turned pale.

The spokesman for the party of Tories seemed somewhat disconcerted, was at a loss what to say, for a few moments, and then he brightened up, and said:

"But what can you do against seven of us?"

"I can, as I have already told you, kill two of you, and then I will make it extremely lively for the other five."

"Bah! if you were to shoot two of us down we would kill you sure!"

"No; there is no certainty that you would do so."

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it."

"You must have lots of confidence in yourself."

"I have."

"You talk as if you were accustomed to fighting against odds of six to ten to one."

"I am." There was no bravado in the tone; the words were spoken in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, just as if the speaker were uttering something of ordinary interest.

"You mean to say that you have often fought against such odds as are against you now?"

"Oh, yes, quite frequently."

There was the accent of truth to Dick's tone and words, and the leader of the Tories exclaimed:

"Well, who in blazes are you, anyway?"

"You wish to know who I am?"

"Yes."

The Tories looked at Dick eagerly, as did the Indian also. There was a peculiar expression on the redskin's face, an expression which seemed to say he knew what was coming, and was enjoying the amazement and discomfiture of the Tories in advance.

"Then I will tell you who I am," said Dick quietly. "My name is Slater—Dick Slater."

This was said in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, without any air of bravado, but it had considerable effect on the Tories. They uttered exclamations, and turned frightened glances upon one another.

It was evident that they had heard of the famous "Liberty Boy."

"Are you really Dick Slater?" asked the spokesman presently.

"I am."

"Captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"Yes."

"But—I—didn't know—I thought you were away over across the river, not far from Albany."

"We were there."

"But are over here now, eh?"

"You are right."

"Why are you here?"

"That is no business of yours."

The Tory leader flushed angrily. He glared at Dick, and there was murder in the look. There is little doubt that he would have been glad to have been in a position to order his men to attack the youth.

He realized, however, that it would be certain death to at least two of his men if he were to make an attack, for he well knew that the youth was not boasting when he said he was a dead shot. He had heard many stories regarding the marksmanship and prowess of the "Liberty Boys."

He hardly knew what to do, but presently decided to try to compromise by promising not to attack the youth if he would go on his way and not interfere with them in their punishment of the Indian. He made the proposition, but Dick shook his head.

"I could not think of doing such a thing," he said, positively.

"You won't agree to let us alone, if we promise to let you alone?"

"No."

"You are a fool!"

"You are a liar!"

A muttered curse escaped the Tory's lips, and he growled out:

"What do you care for a no-account, greasy redskin?"

"I don't think he is no-account."

"Yes he is. All redskins are worthless vagabonds."

"Oh, no; not all."

"Well, I have never seen one that wasn't."

"Yes you have."

"I have?" in surprise.

"When?"

"Right now."

"I don't know what you mean."

"You are very dull, then; I mean that this Indian you have a prisoner, here, is far from being a worthless vagabond."

"What do you know about it?"

"I know a great deal about it."

"You do?"

"Yes; you see, I know Ramonee."

"You know him?" in surprise.

"Yes. I have known him for ten years."

"You have?" in still greater surprise.

"I have. Ramonee is an old friend of mine—isn't that so, Ramonee?" to the Indian, who nodded his head, and said:

"Ugh! Dick Slater an' Ramonee heap lots frien's."

The Tories stared.

"You hear," remarked Dick.

"Yes, but—I don't understand it."

"It is simple enough. Ramonee and I lived in the same neighborhood for years. His tribe's headquarters was not far from my father's farm, and I have played, fished, swam, and hunted with Ramonee scores of times. Isn't that so, Ramonee?"

"Ugh. Heap much so. Me know Dick Slater since we lit' boys togedder. We heap play togedder—wrassle, an' jump, an' run races, an' sometimes purty near fight!" with a grin. "Ugh, we heap big frien's."

"That's right," agreed Dick, with a smile. "I used to beat Ramonee shooting with bow and arrow, and that always made him mad, and often we would have to fight it out, to see which was the better man."

"An' Dick Slater, him allus prove him better man," said the Indian. "Ugh, him heap big brave."

"So, you see, being old friends, as Ramonee and I are, I could not for one moment entertain the proposition which you have made me," said Dick; "the only thing I will listen to is that you go your way and let me set my friend free."

This did not suit the Tories very well, as could be seen by the expression on their faces, but neither did they fancy the looks of the pistols which still stared them in the face.

They hesitated, and the leader was silent. He seemed to be trying to think of something to say, but was at a loss as to what it should be.

"Well, what is your decision?" asked Dick presently.

"See here," said the Tory, slowly and reluctantly. "I don't like the idea of giving up to one man, and I give you fair warning that you are making a mistake in stepping in here and interfering with us in this manner."

"Oh, no; I am making no mistake. On the other hand, it is you who will make a big mistake if you do not accept my proposition and go your way, leaving my friend and myself to go ours."

"But the redskin has forfeited his life to us."

"He has done nothing of the kind."

"He has. He promised that he would go and render such assistance as was within his power to General Burgoyne, and he did not keep his word."

"You forced him to promise, did you not?"

"Yes."

"You held pistols to his head and told him to promise, or you would blow his brains out, is not that the case?"

"It is."

"Well, a promise given under such circumstances is not binding, and he did perfectly right in breaking it."

"You may think so, but we don't."

"You will make up your mind that I am right about the matter, before long, however," said Dick, confidently.

"And if we do not?"

"Then there will be trouble."

"Well, in that case you will have more trouble than we will have."

"Not at all."

"Oh, yes you will."

"Oh, no I won't; there are more of you fellows, consequently you will have more trouble, do you see?"

The Tories looked at one another dubiously. It was evident that they did not like the way the cool "Liberty Boy" talked and acted. They knew him well, by reputation, and felt confident that if it came to an encounter, two or three, perhaps more, would lose their lives, and as they did not know which would be the ones to suffer, they were on the anxious seat, and did not feel very eager to start the trouble.

Their leader looked at his comrades, and seemed to realize this. He hesitated, a dark frown on his face, and finally he said:

"You are determined to stick to the position which you have taken in this matter?"

"I am," was the decided reply.

"You had better reconsider it."

The "Liberty Boy" shook his head.

"No," he said, decidedly. "Ramonee is an old friend of mine. I have known him for years, and as I have already told you, we have hunted, fished, wrestled, jumped, played, and fought together, and I am here now to fight for him to the death if necessary. Be sure of that! If you put Ramonee to death, you will first have to dispose of me, and in disposing of me you will lose one-half your number."

There was no mistaking the earnestness of the youth. The Tories realized that he meant every word he uttered. On the face of the Indian was an expression of delight and admiration for his brave friend and ally. He nodded his head, and said:

"Bad white men big fools if they make fight with the great brave, Dick Slater. He fight like a hunderd wild-cats, an' him kill three of white men, sure—mebby four or five, mebby all."

"We shall accept your proposition, Dick Slater," said the Tory leader, in a fierce, hissing voice. "We accept it, because you have us at a disadvantage, and——"

"What, and you seven to my one?" in a scornful voice.

"But you have your pistols out and cocked, which gives you a chance to kill two of us instantly, so in order to avoid losing any of my men, I shall let you have it your own way—this time. Next time we meet, however, it may be different."

"Perhaps so," was the nonchalant reply. "Perhaps not."

"Well, you have crossed my path, Dick Slater, and you will need to look out from this day forth. Sanford Jenks is not the man to forget a thing like this, and sooner or later he will settle with you."

"I shall be ready to give you all the satisfaction you may wish for, Mr. Jenks," said Dick coolly. "And now, please move on."

The Tories turned and walked toward the edge of the timber, which was only about twenty-five yards distant.

"Better cut um rope, an' free Ramonee's han's, Dick," said the Indian. "Bad white men come back purty quick, mebby."

The "Liberty Boy" leaped to the ground, and replacing one pistol in his belt, drew a knife and cut the rope which bound the Indian's arms.

"Ugh, heap good," said Ramonee; "now white boy jump on horse an' ride away heap fast. Ramonee follow."

Dick leaped on the back of his horse and rode up the road at a gallop, the Indian running behind, on foot, and with wonderful speed.

The Tories whirled at the sound of the hoof-beats, and

seeing what was going on, came running back, firing their pistols as they ran.

CHAPTER III.

A DANGER SIGNAL.

None of the bullets did any damage, however.

Dick and Ramonee were too far away, for one thing, and for another the Tories fired while running, and could not take aim, so there was really not much danger that they would be able to hit either of the fugitives.

The Tories were not very good runners, and soon gave up the chase.

As soon as he noted this, Dick slackened the speed of his horse, and rode at a more moderate pace, the Indian soon overtaking him.

When they had gone half a mile farther they came to a stop.

The "Liberty Boy" dismounted, and led his horse in among the trees at the side of the road.

Then Dick and the Indian grasped hands.

"I'm glad to see you, Ramonee," said Dick.

"Injun heap glad to see you, Dick," was the reply.

"What are you doing away up here?"

"Me liv' up here now."

"You do?"

"Ugh."

"Well, I'm glad to know that you are not helping the British, Ramonee."

"Injun no he'p um, Dick. Ramonee 'member what you say 'bout British, an' me no he'p um fight."

"That's right; and now, Ramonee, can you give me any information regarding the redcoats?"

"Injun know where big camp uv redcoats be."

"You do?"

"Ugh."

"Good! And will you show me where it is?"

"Ugh. Me show."

"When? Right away?"

"Right away, if Dick want."

"That is what I do want, Ramonee. I was looking for the British encampment when I came upon you, back yonder."

"Me show where camp is."

"Is it far from here?"

"'Bout two mile."

"Very well. Lead the way, and I will follow."

"Come 'long, Dick."

The Indian set out, up the road, Dick following, leading the horse.

They made their way along perhaps a mile, and then Ramonee left the road, and plunged in among the trees.

They were soon climbing the side of what was almost a mountain.

"This is pretty hard work, Ramonee," said Dick.

"Ugh; but come to British camp from side where they no expect, Dick."

"I see."

Presently they reached the top of the mountain, and started down the other side.

When they had gone halfway down the Indian paused.

"Better leave horse here," he said.

"All right."

The youth tied the horse, and then they stole on down the mountain side.

The "Liberty Boy" was fully as light of foot as his dusky companion, and they had no difficulty in approaching to within one hundred yards of the edge of the encampment without attracting attention.

Here they paused, and took an observation.

"This is certainly the main camp of the British," whispered Dick, presently.

"Yes; this um heap big camp," was the reply.

Presently Dick saw two British officers approaching, the side of the encampment on which they were secreted.

The officers paused at the edge of the encampment, and sat down in the shade of a large tree.

Presently two more officers joined them.

Dick was on the alert at once.

"They are going to hold a council," he whispered.

"Ugh. Me think so," was the reply.

"Jove, I wish I could hear what they say."

"Creep up like snake," whispered Ramonee. "White boy can do um."

"I've a good mind to try it."

"White brother can do um, all right."

"I'll make the attempt, at any rate, Ramonee."

"That right."

"You stay here, and keep close watch on the redcoats, Ramonee, and if you see danger threatening me, give me a signal."

"Ugh. Me call like um screech owl."

"All right."

Then Dick began stealing forward.

It was yet bright daylight, and one must needs be a

splendid woodsman to get near enough the redcoat officers to hear what they were talking about and not be discovered.

Dick was skilled in woodcraft, however, and felt that he might succeed.

He crept slowly and cautiously forward.

Closer and closer he drew to the point he was aiming for, and every few yards he would pause and wait a few moments, and take observations.

He well knew that one false move would spoil all, and he did not wish to make it.

Soon he had traversed half the distance in safety.

Could he do the same with the other half?

He would do his best.

Onward he moved, slowly and cautiously.

He took advantage of everything that offered the least aid to concealment.

It was slow work, and Dick hoped the officers would not discuss any important matters before he was ready to listen.

At last he was close to the tree under which the officers were sitting.

He could hear the murmur of their voices, but could not distinguish anything that was said.

"I will have to get close to them," the youth told himself.

He began worming himself forward, much after the fashion of a snake.

It was slow and hard work, and difficult work as well.

Suddenly Dick heard the weird sound of the screech owl.

He stopped quick as a flash, and flattening himself out on the ground, lay perfectly still.

"That signal was from Ramonee," thought the youth.

"Some one is approaching, and he feared I would be discovered."

The voices of the four officers were much plainer now, and Dick could almost understand what was said.

He caught an occasional word when the speakers raised their voices.

"If I can get close up to the tree I shall be able to hear what is said, I am confident," the youth thought; "but getting there is going to be a difficult matter, I fear."

Then he heard the sound of footsteps.

Some one was coming.

There was only one thing for Dick to do, however, and that was to lie still; and he did it.

He lay there as motionless as a log, and waited.

Would his presence be discovered by the newcomer?

No, it would not, he presently decided, with a feeling of relief.

The newcomer was another British officer, and he had

thrown himself down beside his fellow officers, on the farther side of the tree.

It had happened that as he approached from the encampment the tree trunk had been between him and Dick, and he had not seen the youth.

The "Liberty Boy" now resumed his forward movement.

Presently he succeeded in reaching the trunk of the tree, and he took up his position behind it with a feeling of relief and satisfaction.

He listened, and was pleased to note that he could hear and understand all that was said by the British officers.

The five officers under the tree were Generals Burgoyne and Riedesel, Lieutenant-Colonels Baum and Breyman, and Major Skene, an American loyalist.

The latter officer had reached the encampment only a few minutes before, and he it was who had approached, and came so near discovering Dick's presence.

His appearance was greeted with pleased exclamations from the other officers.

"Well, Major Skene, what news have you for us?" asked General Burgoyne.

"Good news, General Burgoyne," was the reply.

The "Liberty Boy" behind the tree listened eagerly. He was eager to know what the good news might be, for anything that was good news for the British must be bad news for the patriots.

"Of what does the good news consist, major?"

"I will tell you. About fifteen miles from here, general, is the town of Bennington."

"I have heard of the place."

"Yes? Well, the rebels have made it the point for the storage of supplies."

"Ah," exclaimed the general eagerly. "That is interesting. We are needing provisions badly, major."

"So I know. Well, at this village is a large quantity of provisions and ammunition, as well as several hundred horses."

"Horses, you say."

"Yes, general."

"Good, good! We need horses for drawing our wagons, and if we can capture the provisions and horses, we will be in pretty good shape for resuming our march."

"You are right, General Burgoyne," said General Riedesel, who spoke with a decided German accent.

"Well, there is no reason in the world why you should not capture the horses and supplies, if you wish to do so, General Burgoyne," said Major Skene.

"I am glad to hear that. But why are you so confident?

Are there not a great number of rebels in the vicinity of Bennington?"

"Not such a very great number."

"I should judge that there would be, if the village had been selected as the point for the storing of supplies."

"Well, I'll tell you how it is, general. There are a great many people of the neighborhood who are pretending to be rebels, in order to protect themselves from bad treatment at the hands of the real rebels, and who are yet loyal at heart, and are only waiting for the opportunity to take up arms in behalf of King George."

"Indeed?" exclaimed General Burgoyne. "Are you sure of this, Major Skene?"

"Absolutely certain of it, general," in a decided manner.

"Well, that is good news, indeed, eh, General Riedesel?"

"Yes, General Burgoyne; so far in our march down through the wilderness we have been harassed by the settlers, who have been antagonistic to us, almost to the last family."

"That is true; we have not found many loyal families."

"Well, you will find plenty of them down in the vicinity of Bennington," declared the major. "Just as soon as they see they will be safe in doing so they will declare for the king, and flock to his standard."

"I am glad to hear it. And now, major, how many men do you think will be needed for the purpose of capturing the supplies at Bennington?"

"Five hundred should be plenty, general."

"Good; then I will send five hundred men on the expedition in question at once. General Riedesel, I think I will send your men."

"Just as you like, General Burgoyne."

"And Lieutenant-Colonel Baum, you will have command of the force."

"Thank you, general; I shall be only too glad to undertake the affair."

"In view of the fact that there are so many loyalists who are eager to enroll under the king's banner, why would it not be a good plan to send along a skeleton regiment, General Burgoyne?" remarked General Riedesel.

"That is a good suggestion, general," Burgoyne said, approvingly, "and I am glad you spoke of it. That is exactly what I will do."

"Yes, that will be a good plan," said Major Skene, who at once saw himself in command of the regiment.

The "Liberty Boy," concealed behind the tree, took this all in.

"I wonder if that Major Skene knows what he is talking about?" the youth asked himself. "Can it be possible

that there are such a large number of Tories in the region? Above, I would not have believed it, and I hope that it will turn out that he is mistaken."

"When shall I set out on the expedition, General Bur-
oyne?" asked Lieutenant-Colonel Baum.

"There is no particular need of haste, I judge; so it will be well to take your time, and get everything in shape before starting."

"I had better wait till to-morrow, then?"

"I think so."

"Good! I am glad of that," thought Dick. "It will give me time to carry the news to General Lincoln at Manchester."

At this instant there was a dull thud, which sounded above Dick's head, and he looked up to see an arrow sticking in the tree, the shaft still quivering as a result of the impact.

"Ramonee fired that," said Dick to himself. "It is a signal to me, and means that danger threatens."

CHAPTER IV.

THE TORIES AGAIN.

"What was that?" exclaimed Major Skene, who sat near the tree.

"What is what?" asked Lieutenant-Colonel Baum.

"I heard a thud."

"Oh, it was nothing."

"Perhaps it was nothing of any importance," said the major.

Dick Slater crouched closer to the ground, and looked keenly and searchingly around.

He was sure danger threatened.

Ramonee was not one who would give a needless warning.

The "Liberty Boy" realized this, but felt that he would be safer to remain quiet than to make an attempt to leave his position.

If hostile eyes were scanning the ground in his vicinity he could be almost sure to be seen if he moved, where he might, if he remained quiet, escape observation.

So he crouched there, motionless as the tree behind which he was crouching, and waited, watched, and listened.

He could see nowhere anything that indicated that danger was near, but he felt that it was there, just the same.

The "Liberty Boy" could hear and understand what the

officers were saying, but it was not of great interest; he had already secured the information that was valuable.

He was now eager to get away, but did not dare move, for fear he would be seen.

The British officers finally got through with their council, and made their way back into the heart of the encampment, to their respective tents.

And still Dick lay there, behind the tree, motionless.

He was waiting for a signal from Ramonee.

At last it came.

The plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will was heard.

"That is the signal that the danger is past," thought Dick. "Good! Now I will get away from here."

He began worming his way back toward the shelter of the trees and underbrush.

It was slow work, and hard work, but the youth was equal to it, and kept at it.

Presently Dick reached the shelter, and then he rose to his feet, and made his way along in the regular way, save that he bent forward so as to make himself less likely to be seen.

A few minutes later he reached the spot where he had left Ramonee.

The Indian nodded his head approvingly when Dick appeared.

"White brother heap good in woodcraft," he said. "Good like Injun."

"What was the danger that threatened, Ramonee?" asked Dick. "I could see no sign of any."

"Bad Injuns come out of camp," exclaimed Ramonee. "They pass close to where white brother was, an' if him had moved they would have seen him. That would have been heap bad."

"So it would," with a smile. "Well, I'm glad they didn't see me."

"Yes; now we better go. Bad Injuns they up mountain-side, somewhere—mebby fin' white brother's horse. That be bad, too."

"You are right, Ramonee. I wouldn't take a good deal for that horse, and if they should capture him I would feel very bad about it."

They made their way back up the mountain-side, and as they drew near the spot where they had left the horse they moved very cautiously.

They were afraid the Indians might be there, and if such was the case, they wished to take them by surprise.

It was fortunate that they did move cautiously, for when they came in sight of the horse, they saw that there were four Indians there.

The Indians were trying to untie the horse, but could not get near enough to do so.

The sagacious animal did not like the looks of the painted rascals, and when they made a move as if to approach he would drop his head, lay his ears forward, and kick out with right good-will.

While Dick and Ramonee were watching the scene the four Indians divided into two parties of two each, and while two advanced from the rear the other two made a dash from the front.

Even then the horse was equal to the emergency, for he kicked out with his hind-feet, and then reared up and struck out with his fore-feet.

This last was unexpected, and one of the horse's hoofs struck one of the Indians in the chest and hurled him to the ground, where he lay, kicking and floundering around at a great rate.

"Bad Injun him got heap big thump!" said Ramonee, with a grin.

"You are right," agreed Dick. "I'll warrant you that that stroke will about finish him."

"What white brother goin' to do?"

"Let's dash forward and go for the rascals, Ramonee."

"All right; Ramonee reddy," was the reply.

The two dashed forward, and were almost upon the redskins before their coming was discovered.

The three Indians did not offer to stand their ground and fight.

Instead, they gave utterance to wild yells and dashed away at the top of their speed, leaving their injured companion to his fate.

"Heap big cowards," said Ramonee in disgust, and fitting an arrow to his bow, he sent the feathered shaft after the three, and so good was his aim that he wounded one, and brought forth a wild howl of pain from his lips.

"Ugh! Bad Injun howl like wolf," said Ramonee, scornfully. "Heap big coward."

"We had better be getting away from here, Ramonee," said Dick. "The yells of those rascals will attract the attention of the redcoats down in the camp, and they will come up here to investigate."

"Me reddy to go," said the Indian, and Dick quickly untied his horse, and with a glance at the injured redskin, who lay groaning where he had fallen, they made their way up the mountain-side.

"We will be pursued, likely, Ramonee," said Dick.

"Mebby so," was the reply.

"I am almost certain of it. We had best hurry."

They made their way along as rapidly as possible, and presently reached the top of the mountain.

Here they paused, and looked back down into the British encampment.

Sure enough, there seemed to be considerable stir and excitement down there.

"I judge that we had better part company, Ramonee," said Dick.

"All right; but Injun meet white brother ag'in."

"I hope so, Ramonee."

"Ugh. We see each udder 'g'in, 'fore ver' long."

"All right; good-by till then."

"Good-by," and the two shook hands and parted.

The "Liberty Boy" made his way straight on down the mountain-side, but Ramonee moved away almost at right angles, and quickly disappeared from sight.

On down the mountain-side went Dick, and he had almost reached the road when suddenly seven men rose up from the underbrush in the vicinity and presented leveled pistols at the youth.

"Stop where you are!" called out the leader, threateningly and triumphantly.

"Very well, Mr. Sanford Jenks, I will do so," was Dick's quiet reply.

He had recognized the men in an instant.

They were the band of Tories from whose hands he had rescued Ramonee only an hour or so before."

The youth realized that he was in a dangerous fix.

There were seven of the scoundrels, and even if they were not dead shots, they certainly would not all miss him if they were to fire, and that they would fire if he attempted to draw a weapon he was confident.

They were villainous rascals who would hesitate at nothing.

They were just cowardly enough to be cruel-hearted and merciless when the advantage was on their side.

"What do you want, anyway?" Dick asked, before the leader of the band had time to make a reply to his last remark.

"What do we want?" with a leer.

"Yes."

"Can you ask?"

"I have asked."

"Have you forgotten what happened an hour or so ago down the road a ways?"

"Oh, no, I haven't forgotten."

"Then why ask what we want? You should know what we want without asking."

"I don't see why I should."

"Well, I do. Didn't you interfere in our affairs, and force us to let a prisoner go free?"

"I believe I persuaded you to let my friend, Ramonee, go free."

"Yes, you persuaded us at the point of your pistols."

"Come to think of it, I believe I did draw my pistols," remarked Dick calmly.

"Yes, but it is our turn now."

"So it seems."

"It not only seems so, but is so."

"Well, the pistols are largely in evidence, at any rate."

"You are right; they are; and if you make a move toward drawing a weapon we will fill you full of lead."

"That would be bad," remarked Dick coolly.

"You would think so."

"No doubt; but, say, what are you going to do?"

"First we are going to ask you to raise your hands above your head."

"What for?"

The youth well knew why they wished him to raise his hands, but he wished to bother and delay them as much as possible.

"You'll find out what for."

"Will I?"

"Yes. Up with them."

"Well, if you insist, I suppose I may as well comply," said Dick, and he slowly raised his hands.

"That is sensible," said the leader of the Tories, approvingly.

"Is it?" remarked Dick.

"It is."

"I'm not so sure of it as you seem to be."

"Why, you don't think you could offer successful resistance to the seven of us, do you?" with a sneering laugh.

"Well, I am not at all certain that I could not."

"Bah. You are a fool."

"So are you."

"You are as impudent as ever."

"So I am."

"But we will soon take that out of you."

"Will you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By stringing you up to a stout limb."

"Oh, I guess you will hardly do that."

"You think so?"

"I am sure you would not think of doing such a thing."

"You will find out that we will not only think of doing it, but will do it."

"But that will be wicked."

"Oh, no; it is no crime to hang a rebel."

"I think it is."

"Naturally you would think so, but that doesn't make any difference. You will hang just the same."

The "Liberty Boy" had been talking with a view to catching the Tories off their guard, when he would snatch his pistols out of his belt and make a fight for his life, at any rate. This would be much better than to permit the scoundrels to hang him up to a tree.

The Tories were not to be taken off their guard, however.

It seemed that they had become imbued with a feeling of great respect for the prowess of the young "Liberty Boy," and were not willing to take any chances.

"Sam," said the leader of the party, "remove the weapons from Captain Slater's belt."

The youth wondered what he had better do.

Should he permit the Tory to disarm him, or should he make a fight for his life now and here?

He would have to make up his mind quickly, for the Tory addressed as Sam slipped his own pistol in his belt and stepped forward.

He was almost beside Dick when there came the sharp twang of a bow-string, and a feathered arrow came whistling through the air and struck the Tory in the right shoulder, inflicting a severe wound.

He gave vent to a wild yell of agony, and fell to the ground, while from among the trees a short distance up the slope came the sound of a triumphant war-whoop.

Dick Slater understood the situation instantly. Ramonee had come to his rescue.

As the stricken Tory fell Dick whipped out his pistols, and was enabled to do so without being fired upon because of the fact that the Tories were all gazing in the direction from which the arrow had come, a look of terror on their faces.

Quick as a flash up came Dick's pistols, and he fired two shots, dropping two of the enemy, and then with a word to his horse he was away, the animal plunging right through the little party of Tories.

At the same instant there came another barbed arrow, and down went another of the Tories, severely wounded. This was too much for the other three, who turned and fled for their lives.

CHAPTER V.

TOM AND AMY.

It was indeed Ramonee who had come to Dick's rescue, as the youth had surmised.

The Indian had not gone far after parting with Dick.

He had slipped away to one side and stopped, and then he had stolen forth and followed at a little distance.

He had seen the men leap up and surround his friend, and had at once made up his mind to take a hand in the affair.

He recognized the seven as being the Tories who had been on the point of hanging him, and his teeth came together firmly, and a peculiar glint came into his eyes.

"Ramonee git even with bad white men now," he murmured, and fitting an arrow in the bow, he awaited the moment when he should take a hand.

He waited till he saw Dick raise his hands, and one of the Tories started toward the youth, and realizing that now was the time to interfere, he had fired the arrow that had brought the fellow down.

Then Dick had whipped out his pistols and fired two shots, and dashed away, and Ramonee had fired another arrow with deadly accuracy, bringing down another of the Tories. The three had fled, and all was over.

The entire fracas had not occupied more than twenty seconds.

Ramonee was delighted.

"Me think bad white men no trubble Ramonee enny more," he murmured. "Injun heap glad."

A noise up the hillside, behind him warned him that danger threatened, at this point, and he quickly dropped to the ground and wormed his way to some bushes, behind which he disappeared, and from there he stole away until he was at what he considered a safe distance from the path of the Indians and redecoats from the British encampment.

"They no kin ketch Dick Slater now," Ramonee said to himself, with an air of satisfaction.

Then he hastened away, and walking rapidly, came to a log cabin hidden deep in the woods on the bank of a little stream.

He pushed the door open, and entered.

In the cabin were three persons—a woman of perhaps forty years, a beautiful girl of seventeen, and a man of perhaps forty-five years.

The man was wounded, and his pallid face showed that he had been most severely wounded.

These three constituted a patriot family, whose home had bene visited by Sanford Jenks and his gang of Tories, who had tried to force the patriot to take the oath of allegiance to the king. He was a brave man, and had refused, whereupon the scoundrels had shot him down, and leaving him for dead, had burned the house, after pillaging it of everything of any value.

Ramonee had happened along soon afterward, had found the woman and girl weeping on the body of the supposed dead patriot, and he had made an examination and cheered the two with the information that the husband and father was not dead or even mortally wounded. He was insensible from loss of blood, but the Indian, who was an expert in such matters, told the two that the wounded man would recover, with careful nursing.

So he had placed the body on a rude litter, made by fastening brush in such a manner as to make a rude drag, and on this he placed the insensible man. He then dragged the wounded man to his own cabin, deep in the woods, and gave him such attention as was possible. Of course the surgery was of the rudest, most primitive kind, but it was effective, and the patriot was soon conscious, though very weak.

This was three days before the present time, and Mr. Boswick was gaining strength with each day.

As the Indian entered he was greeted with pleasant smiles and words from all three.

"How?" he said gravely. "Hope sick white man feel better?"

"Oh, yes, I'm better, Ramonee," replied Mr. Boswick, in a feeble voice. "I shall soon be well again."

"Take some time," said the Indian. "White man him purty bad hit. Take good while to be all well 'g'in."

"Yes, you must not be in too big a hurry to get out, James," said Harriet, his wife.

"I have so much that I wish to do," sighed the wounded man.

"What have you to do, James?"

"Well, first, I must hunt the scoundrels down who shot me down in cold blood, and——"

"No need to do that," interrupted Ramonee quietly. "Ramonee an' white brother named Dick Slater whipped whole bad Tory gang, to-day. Only three git 'way."

"Good!" exclaimed the wounded man. "I am glad of that. But you say your friend's name is Dick Slater?"

"Ugh."

"Can it be possible? Dick Slater is the famous young patriot scout, spy, and captain of the 'Liberty Boys' who have created such favorable notice for their desperate daring on the field of battle."

"Dick Slater, him big brave," said Ramonee.

"Indeed he is, Ramonee."

"Ugh. Injun know. Ramonee an' Dick Slater they boys togedder. Long years ago we used to play, an' wrassel, an' run, an' hunt, an' fight togedder, an' we great frien's."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the patriot in surprise. "Where is this, Ramonee?"

"Way down south, on shore of great river. Me live dere many moons. Dick him live dere, too. We have big fun ogedder, dere, but had no seen each udder for long time ill to-day."

"Well, well. I suppose you were glad to see each other."

"Ugh. Me glad to see Dick, for me pris'ner in han's uv ad white men, an' Dick him come along an' make um let be free."

"Indeed? Well, it must have been pleasant for you when you saw him."

"Ugh. But me git even wid Dick. The same bad white men surroun' Dick, an' hol' pistols p'inted at him, an' Ramonee he shoot down two with arrows, an' then Dick him shoot two with pistols an' git 'way."

"Well, that is good."

"Ugh. Heap good."

Just then the sound of swift footsteps was heard, and Ramonee drew his tomahawk like a flash and stood ready to use the weapon if the occasion demanded it.

There was a knock at the door.

"Who there?" called out Ramonee.

"It is Tom Morgan," was the reply. "Are you in there, my?"

"Oh, it's Tom," cried Amy Boswick, her face lighting up with joy, and she leaped forward and opened the door, and the next moment was in the newcomer's arms.

The stranger was a youth of perhaps twenty years. He was a handsome, manly-looking fellow, and was Amy Boswick's promised husband.

"Oh, Tom," murmured the girl, delightedly, as she gave him a kiss for kiss, "where did you come from?"

"I am on my way to Manchester, little sweetheart," replied Tom.

"On your way to Manchester?"

"Yes; wait till I speak to the rest of the folks, and then I will tell you all about it."

He shook hands with Mrs. Boswick, who greeted him pleasantly, and then stepped to the side of the wounded man.

"I'm sorry to see you down on your back, Mr. Boswick," said earnestly, "but I think you will soon be well again."

"I hope so, Tom," as he shook the youth's hand feebly. "My Indian friend here, who saved my life, says I will be well in a few weeks."

"This is Ramonee, isn't it?" asked Tom, as he turned toward the Indian.

"Ugh. That Injun's name," was the reply.

"Well, I'm glad to know you, Ramonee," said Tom, and he shook the Indian's hand heartily.

"How did you know where we were, Tom?" asked Amy.

"I went to your home, Amy, and found it in ashes," was the reply. "While I was standing there one of the neighbors came along and told me that you were in this old cabin, being nursed back to health by an Indian named Ramonee. I set off at once, and was not long in getting here."

"And I'm so glad you did come, Tom."

"Are you, indeed?" smiled Tom, and then he slipped his arm around the girl's waist, and gave her another kiss, which caused her to blush like a peony.

"You mustn't do that, Tom," she protested, rather feebly. "It— isn't nice—before the folks—and Ramonee."

"Then we'll go in the other room, Amy," laughed Tom, and the girl's parents laughed also, and even the Indian, little as he was supposed to know about love as it applied to white people, grinned slightly.

"You hush your foolishness, Tom," said Amy, blushing. "You haven't told us why you are going to Manchester."

"I am going there as a messenger to General Lincoln."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Who from?"

"From Colonel Stark."

"What is going on, Tom?"

"There is going to be some lively work not far from here, and at no very distant day, Amy."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; the British army under Burgoyne is not far from here. It is in rather hard straits, and the men are suffering from hunger. We patriots have a large supply of provisions and ammunition stores at Bennington, and Colonel Stark has learned that there is a movement on foot to try to capture the provisions."

"Ah, that is it?"

"Yes."

"How did he learn it?"

"I happened to overhear a conversation between Major Skene, a Tory, and a friend of his, and the major said he was on his way to the British encampment for the purpose of trying to get Burgoyne to send a force to capture the supplies at Bennington."

"Ah, so you heard this, Tom?"

"Yes; I went to Colonel Stark with the news, and he at

once began getting up a force to go to Bennington and offer battle to the redcoats."

"Good."

"He has gotten eight hundred men together, but he thinks that may not be quite enough for the purpose, so he has sent me to carry a message to General Lincoln, at Manchester, asking the loan of a regiment."

"That is good news indeed," said Mr. Boswick. "I hope you will get the regiment, and that you will succeed in defeating the British at Bennington."

"They do it, all right," said Ramonee, with an air of quiet confidence. "Dick Slater, him gone to Manchester to tell Gen'ral Linkun 'bout the redcoats tryin' to capture s'plies at Bennington, an' him an' him 'Liberty Boys' they be there an' they lick the redcoats like blazes."

"Will the 'Liberty Boys' be there, sure enough?" exclaimed Tom.

"Ugh; they be there," replied the Indian.

"Good. I'm glad of that. I've heard a great deal about them, and their wonderful bravery on the battlefield, and I shall be delighted to see them in action."

"Ramonee and Dick Slater were boy companions and playmates together, Tom," said Amy, "and they met this afternoon, and Dick saved Ramonee's life from some Tories, and then later on Ramonee saved Dick from the same Tories."

"And then they killed some of the gang," said Mr. Boswick; "which gives me considerable pleasure, for it was the same gang that put me where I am."

"Wipe um pret' near out," said the Indian sententiously.

"That is good," said Tom. "Well, I wish I could stay here longer, but it is important that I reach Manchester soon, so I must be going."

"Can't you stop longer as you go back, Tom?" asked Amy.

"I fear not, little sweetheart."

"I wish you could do so."

"I wish you could do so."

"I will stop a while, anyway."

"So you must, Tom," said Mr. Boswick.

The youth turned to the Indian.

"Ramonee, take good care of these folks for me, will you not?" he said.

The Indian nodded.

"Me take good care uv um," he replied.

"Good. I will be your friend for life if you do."

"Injun friend to all patriots," Ramonee said quietly; "so they all frien's to Ramonee."

"That's right."

Then Tom shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Boswick; Ramonee, and was accompanied out of doors by Amy, who wound her arms around Tom's neck and kissed him again and again.

"Promise me that you will be very careful when you go into the battle at Bennington, Tom," she said earnestly.

"I promise to be as careful as a soldier can well be, Amy," was the reply.

They conversed a few minutes, and then Tom said he must go, and giving the girl a hug and kiss, he tore himself away and ran to where his horse was standing, leaped into the saddle, and rode away.

"Dear Tom," murmured Amy, as she watched him out of sight, "how I love him!"

"She's the sweetest, dearest little girl in all the world," thought Tom as he rode along. "Of course I had to promise her that I would be careful when I go into battle at Bennington, but if the 'Liberty Boys' are there I am going to attach myself to their force and go where they go and fight like they fight! That is the kind of work that suits me."

CHAPTER VI.

OFF FOR BENNINGTON.

Dick did not meet with any further adventures that evening, and two hours later reached Manchester, a small village in the midst of the Green Mountains.

General Lincoln was stationed at this point, with quite a respectable force of patriots.

The youth went at once to headquarters to report.

General Lincoln was looking over some despatches.

He looked up, and a smile of pleasure illumined his face as he saw who his visitor was.

"Back again, eh, Dick?" he remarked.

"Yes, general."

"Have you been to the British encampment?"

"I have."

"Learned anything?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"I learned that the British are planning to capture our supplies at Bennington."

The general started.

"Ha! So that is their scheme, is it?"

"It is."

"And a very good one, too—if we had not discovered their plan."

"Yes; there is quite a large quantity of stores at Bennington, is there not?"

"Yes; and several hundred horses."

"Well, the British need both horses and provisions, I judge."

"I have no doubt of it."

"You are right; the redcoats are suffering from hunger."

"That is good news."

"Yes; the settlers have turned out in such large numbers, in the region through which the British have been marching, with muskets and the will to use them, that the redcoats have not been able to secure a sufficiency of provisions."

"And if they can capture the supplies at Bennington they will be all right."

"Yes; that is what they seem to think."

"Well, we must not let them do it."

"You are right."

"When are they to make the attempt?"

"They are going to start on the march toward Bennington to-morrow."

"To-morrow, eh?"

"Yes; just as soon as they can get their men ready."

"Well, in that case it becomes necessary that we should let our men started to-night, so as to get there ahead of the enemy."

"Yes."

"It will be a long march."

"Yes, but it will be even more pleasant in the night than during the day, as it won't be so hot."

"True."

Just then an orderly stuck his head through the doorway, and said:

"A young man to see you, General Lincoln."

"Who is he?"

"He says his name is Tom Morgan."

"What is his business?"

"He says it is of great importance, and that he must see you right away."

"Oh, he does, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, send him in."

The orderly disappeared, but returned a few moments later and ushered a youth of perhaps nineteen years into the room.

"Tom Morgan," he announced, and withdrew.

General Lincoln and Dick Slater looked the newcomer over with considerable interest.

They saw he was a bright, handsome young fellow, and were favorably impressed by his appearance.

"You are General Lincoln?" the youth asked, addressing the general.

"I am," was the reply.

"Very well; here is a letter for you."

He handed the officer a letter.

Lincoln opened the letter and read it through with considerable interest.

"It is from my old friend, Colonel Stark," he said, more as if speaking to himself than to the youth.

"Colonel Stark?" exclaimed Dick. "I have heard of him. He is a fighter, they say."

"You are right," agreed General Lincoln. "He is a fighter, and that is why he has sent this messenger to me. He has in some manner discovered the plot to capture the supplies at Bennington, and has sent to me to ask the loan of a regiment to assist him in beating the British off."

"Ah, he is getting up a force to put against the British, then?" asked Dick.

"Yes; he says he has about eight hundred men, and believes that even with that number he would be able to stand the British off, but to make sure of it he asks that I send him a regiment."

"Well, that is all right," smiled Dick. "You were going to send a regiment anyway, and we are glad to know that we will have assistance."

"You are right."

After some thought, General Lincoln decided to send the regiment commanded by Colonel Seth Warner. This gallant regiment had stopped the advance of Fraser at Hubbardston, and was made up of veterans.

"Yes, I will send Colonel Warner's regiment of infantry, and your company of horse, Dick," he said, presently. "These, in addition to his own force of eight hundred, ought to be sufficient to beat the British."

"I should think so," agreed Dick. "When shall we start?"

"To-day."

"Good."

"You will return with my force, Mr. Morgan?" asked the general.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "I will accompany the company of horse, as I am here on horseback."

"Very well."

"I will go and begin getting ready to start," said Dick.

"Step in at Colonel Warner's quarters and send him here, Dick," said the general.

"All right, sir."

Then Dick saluted and left the room, as did Tom Morgan also, and as soon as they were out of doors, the latter said to Dick:

"Are you Dick Slater, captain of the 'Liberty Boys'?"

"I am," was the reply.

"So I suspected. Well, I am glad to make your acquaintance, Dick."

"And I am glad to know you, Tom."

"I have long known you by reputation, but had not expected the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"I had no idea a week ago that I would be over in this part of the country," replied Dick. "The commander-in-chief sent us over here to assist General Lincoln."

They stopped at the quarters occupied by Colonel Warner, and Dick told the officer that General Lincoln wished to see him in his room at headquarters at once.

"All right; I'll go right over," the colonel said, and he set out.

Dick and Tom went on till they came to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

Here Dick introduced Tom, and he was given a hearty greeting by the youths.

When Dick told the "Liberty Boys" that they were to go on a journey at once they were delighted.

"Good! That suits us," cried Bob Estabrook.

"So it does!" from Mark Morrison.

"Yes, yes!" in chorus from a score of throats.

"So the British are going to try to capture the supplies at Bennington, are they?" exclaimed Sam Sanderson.

"And we are going to go over and help beat them!" laughed Bob. "That suits me."

"Begin preparations for the trip, boys," said Dick.

"All right," in chorus, and the youths began busying themselves with their weapons, getting them cleaned and loaded and in shape for use.

Meanwhile Colonel Warner had arrived at the headquarters building.

"You wish to see me, general?" he asked.

"Yes, colonel," was the reply. "I have just learned that the British are going to make an attempt to capture the supplies at Bennington."

"Ah, ha! say you so?"

"Yes, colonel; and I have just received a message from Colonel Stark, who says he has eight hundred men, and will fight the British back, but that he would like the loan of a

regiment to make sure of being able to do the work successfully."

"Exactly."

"So I have made up my mind, Colonel Warner, to send you with your regiment."

"Good!" exclaimed the officer. "I shall be only too glad to go."

"So I judged would be the case."

"You are right; my men are eager to do something, and will welcome the command to get ready to march."

"Even though the command comes at dark, and they will have to march all night, colonel?"

"Yes; they will not care for that if there is good prospect of getting a chance at the redcoats at the other end of the road."

"Well, I guess there can be no doubt but that they will get the chance, as I have double information to the effect that the British intend making the attempt to capture the supplies at Bennington."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; Dick Slater overheard the British officers talking of the matter, and making their plans, and Colonel Stark was informed of the attempt by one of his spies, who overheard a Tory officer talking with another loyalist, and telling him that an attempt would be made to capture the supplies at Bennington."

"Then there can be no doubt that the attempt will be made."

"Oh, no; the British are in a bad way for food, and they would like nothing better than to secure the supplies we have stored at Bennington."

"Oh, they will make the attempt; there is no doubt regarding that."

"And we must be there to beat them back."

"Yes; that will be the thing to do."

"I will go and give my men the order to make ready for the march, if you say so, general."

"Very well, colonel; the quicker you get started the better, without doubt."

"Very well; then I am to march to Bennington and report to Colonel Stark?"

"Yes, colonel. You have no objections to taking orders from him?"

"Oh, no; he is an older officer than myself, though not higher in rank, and I shall be willing to take orders from him. All I ask is a chance to strike the enemy a severe blow."

"Well, you will have the chance to do so, I am certain."

ess think so. Is there anything further you wish to say?"

No; that is all there is to it: To march to Bennington and report to Colonel Stark."

Very good. I will be away to get my men off at the latest possible moment."

Then he saluted and withdrew.

General Lincoln sat down at his desk, and wrote a letter to Colonel Stark, stating that he was sending the regiment requested, and when he had finished he called the orderly, and told him to send Dick Slater to headquarters at once. The orderly saluted and withdrew, and ten minutes later Dick appeared.

"Are they about ready to start, Dick?" asked the general.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "and we will be away in half an hour."

"Good! Well, here is a letter which you will hand to Colonel Stark as soon as you get to Bennington, Dick."

"Very well, sir."

The "Liberty Boy" placed the letter in his pocket, and after some further conversation, bade the officer good-bye and took his departure.

When he was passing Colonel Warner's quarters the officer called him.

"You and your 'Liberty Boys' are going with us, I believe, Dick?" he remarked.

"Yes, colonel," was the reply.

"How soon will you be ready to start?"

"We are ready now."

"All right; my men are almost ready."

"It looks as if it is going to be a bad night for a march, Dick."

"You think it will storm, Dick?"

"It looks a bit like it. It is clouding up, you notice."

"Yes, I had noticed it. It does look as if it might rain."

"Yes."

"I hope it won't."

"So do I. It will be bad for your men who have to travel without boots."

"And not any too pleasant for your boys, who are on horseback."

"That's true, too, but they will be able to stand it better than those who walk."

"Yes."

Half an hour later the regiment of infantry and the company of "Liberty Boys" started.

As they left the encampment the flash of lightning was seen far away to the west, and the faint rumble of thunder was heard.

"I fear we are in for a ducking," said Dick to Colonel Warner, who was on horseback and was riding beside the youth.

"I fear so, Dick."

CHAPTER VII.

NO LOYALISTS APPEAR.

On this same evening of which we have been writing there was considerable excitement in the village of Bennington.

Colonel Stark had taken up his quarters there, and the yeomen were coming in from every direction, in response to the solicitations of messengers sent out by the colonel.

Colonel Stark was an old man, but was yet full of vim and energy, and than he there was no better fighter in the patriot army.

He was a veteran of the Seven Years' War, and had also taken a prominent part in the present war, he having fought bravely at Bunker Hill, Trenton, and Princeton.

However, when Congress had passed him by in making promotions, as had been the case, the same as it was in that of Arnold, he naturally became miffed, and went home in disgust.

When he learned, however, that the British were invading New England, and were laying plans to capture the supplies at Bennington, he could not hold back any longer, but came forth and began rallying men to his standard.

He declared that he was acting under the sovereignty of New Hampshire, and would go on his own responsibility and attack the invading British; but, as we have seen, he at the same time deemed it wise to send and ask for reinforcements.

And now, as we have said, the yeomen were gathering at Bennington from every direction.

Clad in their homespun of blue, they presented a picturesque appearance, but while they did not look like soldiers yet they were dangerous foes, for each and every man was a trained marksman, and with the long rifle which he carried in his hands could bring down a squirrel out of the top of the highest tree every time.

Colonel Stark, grim and almost fierce-looking, watched the men as they entered the village, and there was a growing look of satisfaction on his face as the number of the men grew.

As night came on the yeomen ceased coming, and when the colonel took stock of his force he estimated that there

were at least nine hundred men in the village, and each and every one ready to offer fight to the British.

An hour after dark it set in to rain, and kept it up steadily almost all night.

The regiment under Colonel Warner, headed by the company of "Liberty Boys," reached Bennington early in the morning.

They were drenched to the skin, however, and the infantry especially, were almost exhausted. Marching in the dark, over mountain roads in pouring rain, was not the easiest or most pleasant work in the world.

Colonel Warner and Dick Slater went at once to the house occupied by Colonel Stark, and he greeted them warmly, and insisted that they don dry clothing. By the time they had done this a good, warm breakfast was on the table, and when they had eaten their fill they were feeling much better.

"I am indeed glad that General Lincoln has sent you to aid me," Colonel Stark said, when he had read the letter which Dick gave him. "With the force now at my command I think it will be an easy matter to beat the British."

"I think so, sir," said Dick.

"There can be no doubt regarding it," said Colonel Warner.

"You are right, if they send no more than five hundred men, as Captain Slater says they stated was their intention."

"Five hundred of General Riedesel's German troops, and a skeleton regiment is what was decided upon," said Dick.

"Well, we can easily beat them back, and may be able to bag the entire force," said Colonel Stark.

"So it looks to me," agreed Warner.

"I have about nine hundred men here, already," said Stark, "and while they are yeomen, simple farmers, yet they are brave, and can shoot with the best, and I feel that we shall be able to hold the redcoats in check without much difficulty. So I will take my men and push out to meet the enemy, while you let your men stay here to rest and get dry."

"Very well, Colonel Stark," said Colonel Warner; "and we will follow you just as soon as the men are in condition to march."

"Good! That will be all right."

An hour later Colonel Stark's force marched out of the village and away, up the road which it was almost certain the enemy would travel over in coming to Bennington.

This was proved to be a good forecast of the course of the enemy, for the British were met at a point about six miles from Bennington.

The British encampment was astir before daybreak in the morning, and the Germans under Lieutenant-Colonel Baum, with the skeleton regiment, which was to be commanded by Major Skene as soon as the men had been recruited, was ready to march at an early hour.

The force marched out of the encampment and away, indeed, at sunrise, and the men marched steadily onward several hours.

Colonel Baum and Major Skene rode at the head of the force, and when they had been marching an hour, and passed a dozen settlers' homes without a single man coming out to declare for King George, and offer his services to help fight for the king, the colonel turned a somewhat cynical look upon his companion, and said:

"Where are all those loyalists you were speaking of, major? I have been expecting to receive recruits at the house we came to, but not a man has come forth."

"We have not got far enough down toward Bennington yet," was the reply. "We may get an occasional recruit from now on, but it will be an hour before we reach the region where the loyal settlers are thickest."

Presently they came to another house, and Colonel Baum ordered a halt.

When the soldiers had come to a stop, he rode up to the front gate and called out loudly:

"Hello!"

A woman came to the door. She was tall and thin, and when she saw the array of soldiers she looked somewhat alarmed.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I wish to see the man or men of the place. Are any?"

"Well, I have a husband, but he ain't to home."

"Where is he?"

"I think he went huntin', sir."

"Humph. What is he, Whig or Tory?"

"I really dunno, sir; I never heard him say much of such things."

The colonel looked at Major Skene and made a wry face.

"I'll wager a month's pay her husband is in the hands of the rebels there, and that he's a rank rebel," he growled.

"Supposing you let the men search the house, colonel?"

"No, it would be a waste of time. We can't afford to stop when we are out on such important business."

Then he gave the order to march, and rode away in company with the major, the soldiers marching along behind.

And as the end of the column was disappearing down the road a tall, blue-coated settler strolled out from the

he timber and approached the house. In his hand was a long rifle.

"Wal, Marthy; they didn't ketch me, did they?" he said, with a grin.

"No, but I was afeerd they would rob us out of house an' me, Sam," was the reply.

"So they would hev done, I expeck, ef et wuzn't thet they hev bigger game in sight."

"Whut are they goin' to do, Sam?"

"They air on their way to Bennington, an' they inten' to capter the hosses an' supplies theer."

"Well, I'm afraid they'll succeed, Sam; theer's a lot uv 'em, sure."

"No; they won't succeed. Cunnel Stark is theer, with er uv men, an' he's goin' ter giv' ther redcoats a big fight."

"Are you goin', Sam?" in an anxious tone.

"I guess ez how I will, Marthy. I kin take ther short tererost ther mountain, an' beat 'em easy enuff."

"Well, be keerful, Sam."

"I will, Marthy; good-bye."

"Good-bye," and then the settler strode away, his rifle on his shoulder.

Colonel Baum had been very nearly right in his conjecture regarding the settler; he was not in the house at the time, as the colonel had guessed, but he certainly was a patriot.

As the British force made its way along it was fired upon frequently from the timber at the roadside, and several of the redcoats were killed, and others were wounded.

After this had been going on awhile, Colonel Baum ordered a halt.

"I don't like the looks of things, Major Skene," he said. "The farther we go the worse it seems, and I don't believe that the loyalists you spoke of are to be found. You should know more about it than I do, but somehow I feel that we will meet with a great many more enemies than friends up in these parts."

"I am confident there are lots of loyalists," insisted Major Skene, but there was less confidence in his tone than there had been before.

"There may be, but just the same I do not feel that it will be wise or safe to venture to attack Bennington with our present force. I shall send back to the encampment for reinforcements."

He summoned one of the two men who had accompanied them on horseback for the purpose of doing messenger work in case it were necessary, and told him to go back to the encampment to tell General Burgoyne that the aspect of the

people was so threatening that it would be necessary to send reinforcements.

"Tell him that I said for him to send at least five hundred," he added; "and have them on the road at the earliest possible moment."

The courier rode away at a gallop, and then the redcoats resumed the march.

Onward they went, and they were fired upon from the timber with constantly increasing frequency.

Several volleys were fired by the redcoats, but if they did any damage they did not know it, for they did not hear any sounds afterward to indicate that anyone had been injured.

The face of Colonel Baum was sober, and it grew more and more sober the farther they advanced on their way.

"I don't like the looks of things, at all," he said with a grave shake of the head.

"I think we will begin to get some recruits when we get nearer Bennington," said Major Skene, but he did not speak very confidently, and the look on the colonel's face told very plainly that he did not have much faith in this view of the case.

"I think this whole country is a nest of rebels," he declared, "and I shall consider that we are very fortunate if we succeed in this matter that we are engaged upon."

Baum was a cautious, conservative officer, and was, moreover, keen and shrewd, and he had long since made up his mind that Major Skene was a trickster who had his own aggrandizement at heart, and that his main idea in getting the British to make the attempt to capture the supplies at Bennington was in order that he might have an opportunity to organize a regiment and command it.

Onward they made their way as rapidly as the soldiers could march, and made very good progress. They were within six miles of their destination, indeed, when they suddenly found themselves confronted by a force much larger than their own.

It was Colonel Stark's force, and as soon as Colonel Baum saw the enemy he realized that serious work was ahead for his soldiers.

He at once caused his force to take up a position on rising ground, just across a small creek called the Walloom-sac River by courtesy. This little stream was easily fordable everywhere, and would not offer much obstruction to the enemy, but it was better than nothing, and then, too, the sloping ground just beyond would have to be traversed by the enemy, so Colonel Baum felt that he had a very strong position.

Scarcely had the two armies confronted each other be-

fore the rain began falling in torrents, and it kept at it during all the rest of the day.

"That is to our advantage," said Colonel Baum. "It will give us time to throw up breastworks, and dig trenches, and we will be enabled to counteract the superior force of the enemy."

He put his men to work at once, and the rain softened the ground, and made the work easier than it otherwise would have been.

The soldiers worked steadily, and by evening had thrown up breastworks, and made trenches to such an extent that great satisfaction was felt by all.

"I think we shall be able to give the enemy a warm reception when it comes to attack us," said the colonel, with considerable satisfaction apparent in his tone and air.

"I think so," agreed Major Skene.

The latter gentleman was looking anything but happy, however. He could now see no hope of being able to fill in the regiment as he had expected to do, and his great chance for glory and power seemed to have slipped away from him.

Night came, and still it rained.

"It looks as if it had set in for all night," growled the major as he sat under Colonel Baum's tent, with water trickling down his back.

"I hope it will do so," was the colonel's calm reply.

"You do?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"But think of the discomfort, man."

"Bah! What matters a little discomfort? The enemy will not attack in such a storm, and as I would much rather see them when they do make the attack, I hope the rain will continue all night and cause a postponement of hostilities until morning."

CHAPTER VIII.

MISTAKEN FOR TORIES.

Colonel Stark was well pleased when he saw the enemy in front of him.

"I think they have got just about as close to Bennington as they will get," he said grimly. "One thing is certain, in order to get there they will have to first get past us—and they can't do that without walking over the top of us."

"Which will be rather a difficult feat, eh, colonel?" remarked Dick, who, with his "Liberty Boys," was on hand.

"Yes, indeed, Dick. My men are not trained so but they will fight, you may be sure, and they can s

"Yes, indeed, and a volley or two from men wh before they fire will do more to discourage an army one who knows nothing about such matters would thi

"You are right; a volley fired by men who take c aim, and are good shots, will do more damage than a ordinary volleys fired by men who simply level their ons and pull the triggers."

Tom Morgan was with Dick and the "Liberty B "I'm going to stick right by you till this affair is over Dick," he said, and the youth told him that was all

Colonel Stark at once began making preparation an attack. The regiment under Colonel Warner put appearance, presently, and an attack would have been but for the fact that a hard rain set in.

It rained steadily, and an attack was out of the ques as it would be impossible to do any shooting when the was pouring down.

All that could be done was to wait patiently for the to cease, and this was done; but the rain did not cease day. Neither did it stop with the coming of night, continued to pour down.

"We will have to postpone the attack till to-morro judge," said Colonel Stark to Colonel Warner, somew disconsolately.

"Yes; I judge so; well, it can't be helped."

"No; we shall have to take it as it comes, and make best of it."

About ten o'clock that night, in the midst of the stor company of militia from Berkshire arrived, and at its h was a Mr. Allen, a preacher, and a man with a reputatio a fighter, notwithstanding the peaceful nature of his c ing.

He entered the tent occupied by Colonel Stark, and ported the arrival of the company of militia.

"Colonel Stark," he said, earnestly, "our Berkshire ple have been called out again and again, to no purpose, they have become tired of it. Here we are again, in midst of a driving rainstorm, and if you don't let us f this time we will never come out again."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Colonel St grimly. "Shall we make an attack now, in the midst this storm?"

"No; I don't ask that, colonel. But I do ask that as s as the storm is over you make an attack, and give the vading redcoats a taste of New England fighting."

"I give you my word, Mr. Allen, that this shall be don

he calm reply. "Just as soon as it quits raining, and an shines forth, we will make an attack, and I think will get all the fighting you want."

ood! That is what I like to hear."

rained till the small hours of the morning, and then as suddenly as it had begun.

he sun rose bright and clear that morning, and at once armies were on the alert.

he sun shone down on the sodden ground with such as to cause a thick steam to go up, and it was im- ble to see any great distance clearly for an hour or so. lonels Stark and Warner, and Dick Slater—in whose ment the others had great faith—held a council of war, talked the matter of the attack over in all its details.

have a suggestion to make," said Dick presently. uld you like to hear it?"

certainly, Dick," replied Colonel Stark, while Colonel er nodded assent.

he suggestion which I have to make," said Dick, "is that a portion of our force slip around to the rear e enemy, and when they have gotten in position, to them start the attack; then we could make an attack the front, and with the enemy between two fires, I they would soon surrender."

hat is a good idea, Dick," said Colonel Stark, approv-

es, indeed," said Colonel Warner.

f course it will delay the attack two or three hours," Dick; "but I think it will be a delay that is well worth having."

es, indeed," said Colonel Stark; "and we will begin work at once."

There is one peculiarity about the British and their the German soldiers," went on Dick; "they seem to that men who do not wear uniforms cannot fight— seem to think that unless men have uniforms on they ot be dangerous, and even if they see our men march- around to their rear the chances are that they will hink any danger is to be apprehended from them—that they go in small parties of from two to half a dozen." I think you are right about that, Dick," said Colonel k, and he at once gave the order for a part of the force arch around and take up a position in the rear of the sh.

ou will go in small parties of from two to half a " he ordered; "and you will simply saunter along in concerned manner, and the British will probably not et that you are meaning them harm at all."

e men began moving at once. They took their depart-

ure in little parties of two or more, up to half a dozen, and walked leisurely in a semi-circle around the British en- campment.

* * * * *

The British had passed a very uncomfortable night.

They had no shelter save the trees under which their blankets were spread, and they were soaked to the skin.

When the sun rose clear, however, and they began to get dry, once more they felt some better.

"We must be ready for an attack now," said Colonel Baum, and he gave the order for his men to be on the alert.

One, two, three hours passed, and still the enemy did not make an attack.

Colonel Baum hardly knew what to think.

"Why are they waiting?" he asked Major Skene; but that officer could not give him any enlightenment.

"Probably they are waiting for the coming of more re- inforcements," said the major.

"Well, I hope they will wait long enough so that our reinforcements will have time enough to get here."

"Yes, so do I."

"We will be in a position to bid defiance to them, if our reinforcements arrive before the attack is made."

"So we will."

Presently one of the sentinels sent word to Colonel Baum that he had seen two or three parties of from two to five and six men moving through the timber.

The colonel at once hastened to the point in question and kept a sharp lookout.

Presently a party of four men was seen.

The men were dressed in the style of the farmers of the vicinity—in homespun blue, with squirrel-skin caps, and Colonel Baum, a veteran soldier, accustomed to seeing uni- formed soldiers, in perfect military array, could not think that there was any danger to be apprehended from these rustics.

He sent for Major Skene, and pointed out one of these parties—for he saw several in the space of a few minutes.

"Who are they?" he asked.

Major Skene shook his head.

"I'm sure I cannot say, colonel," he replied.

"They are farmers, are they not?"

"Yes."

The colonel was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"Perhaps they are the loyalists you were looking for, ma- jor?"

Major Skene had his doubts, but he was willing that Col-

onel Baum should think so, as it would make it easier for him.

He had been feeling very cheap, ever since it had been found that loyalists did not flock to the British standard as he had said they would do if it was set up among them, and so, while now he had doubts regarding the rustics being loyalists, he did not say so.

He made a bad mistake in taking this course, but he, like Colonel Baum, did not think the little parties of farmers could be dangerous.

"It may be that they are loyalists, and that they will join us later on," said the major.

"I think likely that is it; probably they have seen the rebel force down in front, and are making their way around to our rear, with the intention of coming forward and lending us assistance as soon as the attack is made."

"That is possible, colonel."

"Of course, being farmers, and not soldiers, they would not be able to do much, but a little assistance will be better than none at all, and will be welcomed."

"True," agreed the major.

So sure was Colonel Baum that the men in question were loyalists, coming to render his force assistance, that he sent a soldier into the timber at the rear of the position occupied by his force, with instructions to have a talk with them as to what they were to do, when the battle should begin.

The soldier made his way in the direction indicated.

He walked freely and openly, and with confidence, for he was sure the strangers were Tories, and consequently friends.

He soon came upon a party of half a dozen of the rustics, who were seated on a log, talking.

They ceased talking as the British soldier approached, and looked at him curiously.

"Good-morning," the soldier said, pausing and leaning on the muzzle of his musket.

"Good-mornin'," replied one of the men, who seemed to be chosen as spokesman by common consent.

"I have been sent here by my commander, Colonel Baum, of the king's service, to hold a conference with you," the redcoat said.

"Is that so?"

"Yes; he wishes to have an understanding with you."

"Does he?"

"Yes; he wishes me to tell you that as soon as the rebels make the attack, he wants that you shall advance, and assist in repulsing them."

"He does, eh?"

"Yes."

The patriots hardly knew what to think. They at one another questioningly.

They wondered if the British were trying some kind of a trick.

"Can it be possible that the redcoats think we are Tories?" was the question that came to them, and almost believed that this was the case.

"Well, you may tell Colonel Baum that he can count on us," said the spokesman, quietly.

"Good; I'm glad of that. I'll tell him. By the way, how many of you loyalists are there?"

The men exchanged glances. The British did think they were Tories, and consequently friends, after all.

This was fine! It was better than they had hoped.

They had hoped that the British might think they were simply rustics, and not dangerous, but they had not expected that the enemy would mistake them for Tories.

"How many of us, you ask?"

"Yes."

"Well, I can not answer, with any degree of accuracy. You see, I don't know how many will come out. I judge, however, that there will be a hundred here."

"Well, that will be a sufficient number to help some."

"Yes, so it will."

"Well, as soon as the attack is made, have your men advance, and back our force up, and then you will be ready to help us when help is needed."

"Very well; we will do so. Tell your commander I depend on us."

"All right."

Then the soldier returned to the encampment, and reported to Colonel Baum and made his report.

"I saw some of the Tories," he said, "and had a talk with them."

"Good," exclaimed the colonel. "What did they say?"

"I told them you were expecting that they would advance forward and help as soon as the rebels made the attack. They said for me to tell you that you could depend on them."

"That is good."

"Yes; I don't think, from the looks of them, that they will amount to much as fighters, but they may be able to help some."

"Yes, you are right."

"The man I talked to said he thought there would be at least a hundred of them."

"That is quite a good many; and they will help in increasing our numbers look large, at any rate."

"Yes, so they will."

when the redcoat had taken his departure, the half dozen
ts exchanged words of congratulation.

"Fine fools think we are Tories and friends," said the
man.

"Yes," from another, "and that makes it all the better
and."

it does; but I think they will be surprised before very
a d

es; they will be expecting the attack to be made from
thront, and will look for assistance from the rear, when
ttack is to be made from the rear, and from the men
in think are friends."

es; they will be surprised, indeed."

ed, well, they ought to be. Who would have thought that
ey would be such fools as to think we were friends?"

ndon't know who would have thought it," said one. "I
ies would have thought such a thing."

ay, this is too good news to keep," said another. "Let's
word to Colonel Stark regarding the matter."

ell right. Who will carry the news to him?"

s will," said one.

ll right; go along."

ne fellow hastened away without more words.

ay, won't Colonel Stark be delighted when he hears
news," laughed one, and the others said they thought
uld be delighted.

will make our work much easier to have the redcoats
h us friends," said one.

es; and it will make the blow much more startling and
e when we open fire upon them from the rear," said

er. "It will take them more aback to be attacked by
they think are their friends than if the attack came
a men whom they knew to be enemies, but held in con-
ot as such."

You are right about that."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS' " BEST BLOWS.

it did not take the man long to reach the patriot en-
pment. He went at once to where Colonels Stark and
ner and Dick, Slater were sitting, talking.

Do you wish to speak to me, Sam?" asked Colonel
k, who knew the man by name.

Yes, colonel," was the reply, with a broad smile. "I
some news for you."

"Indeed? What is it?"

"You would never guess, so I will tell you at once, and be
done with it. The British up yonder," motioning toward the
encampment beyond the Walloomsac, "think we are Tories,
and their friends."

"What!" exclaimed Colonel Stark.

"You don't mean it," from Warner.

"What fools they must be," smiled Dick.

"Yes, they think we are Tories."

"How do you know they do?" the colonel asked.

"They sent a man to confer with us."

"They did?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the best joke I have ever heard of," said
Stark, his grim face relaxing into a smile.

"So it is," agreed Warner.

"This man that came to us," went on the patriot, "said
that his commander, Colonel Baum, wanted that as soon
as the attack on them was made from the front we should
advance from the rear and render all the assistance in our
power."

"That is good," said Stark, rubbing his hands. "Let
them keep right on thinking thus, and we will give them
a surprise that will come very near paralyzing them."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Warner. "It will certainly be
a severe blow to them to find themselves attacked by the
men they were looking to for assistance."

"Yes; and they will be looking for the attack from this
side, and it will come from the rear," said Dick. "That
will cause them to be thrown into great disorder."

"Yes; I think that we shall be able to overwhelm them
without much difficulty," said Stark. "This thing is just
as I would have wished to have it if I had had the choos-
ing."

"Who would have thought that they would take us to be
Tories and friends?" grinned the patriot.

"No one," said Warner. "But now that they have made
the mistake, we will take advantage of it, and it will go far
toward helping us overwhelm them, as Colonel Stark says."

The patriot returned to his companions away around at
the rear of the British encampment, and they were eager to
hear how Colonel Stark received the news that the British
thought them to be Tories and friends.

"He was delighted," the messenger said. "He thinks it
is the greatest joke that he ever heard of, and says it will
make it possible for us to overwhelm the redcoats with
ease."

"That's what I think," said one.

"Yes, it will be a big help to us," from another.

The parties of from two to a half dozen patriots kept on marching around to the rear of the British encampment, and this was kept up till noon, at which time at least five hundred were there, and in position, ready to make the attack at the signal.

They had taken up their positions directly in the rear of the redcoat's encampment, and also on both flanks, and when the signal should be given, they would make an attack from the three quarters, and then as soon as they had inaugurated the engagement the other part of the patriot force would make an attack from the front.

As it was dinner-time, it was decided to defer making the attack until after the men had eaten. As the force that was to make the attack was supposed to be friends of the redcoats, there was no need of haste in making the attack.

So bold were some of the patriots that they made their way to the British encampment and boiled some pots of coffee over the campfires of their enemies. It was a bold thing to do, but under the circumstances they were absolutely safe in doing it. Indeed, it had a good effect, as it made the British all the more certain that the men were Tories.

When the men had finished their meal they began making preparations for the attack, and when they were in readiness, word was sent, by a chain of men stationed for the purpose, to Colonel Stark, and he gave the signal for the attack, the signal being the sound of a single pistol-shot.

The instant the signal was heard the patriots, who had crept up till they were within easy musket-shot distance of the British, took careful aim, and opened fire.

Had a clap of thunder sounded from a clear sky the redcoats would not have been more surprised.

They were attacked—and by the men whom they had thought were their friends.

It was terrible. The redcoats were for the moment paralyzed with amazement and horror.

The patriots had done great damage in the first volley, too, for they were splendid shots, and had taken careful aim before firing.

They would have done a great deal more damage than they did do, had it been possible for each man to choose a separate target, but they were not able to do this, and the result was that often four or five selected the same man as a mark, and he went down filled with bullets, so to speak, while others were not hit at all.

It was bad enough, however, and the British were almost demoralized. They realized, now when it was too late, that they had been deceived, had been tricked.

The Americans had been too shrewd for them.

They rallied as best they could, and returned the fire, and while this was going on the force in front was getting into action.

Colonel Stark ordered a charge, and with the "Liberty Boys" in the lead, five hundred patriots dashed across the Walloomsac River and up the slope, and attacked the redcoats fiercely, firing as they did so.

There had been one hundred Indians with Colonel Baum's force, but at the very first fire from the patriots the redskins fled to the timber, howling like fiends.

The surprise had been too much for them.

Colonel Baum was a brave officer, and he rallied his men as best he could, and they fought desperately.

The Germans were veterans, and fought with great valor and steadiness, but they were attacked from all sides at once, and by an overwhelming force, and were soon thrown into disorder.

They held out for two hours, however, and then their brave commander, Colonel Baum, was mortally wounded, and the entire force threw down their weapons and surrendered.

Wild cheers went up from the patriots.

They were wild with delight.

The British had come for the purpose of capturing the stores at Bennington, but had not even been able to reach Bennington.

They had been met by the patriots, attacked, and their entire force had been captured.

Foremost in the ranks of the patriots had been the "Liberty Boys."

They had fought so fiercely that the British had been forced to give way before them, and their example had inspired the other patriots to fight fiercely.

Colonel Stark was willing to give great credit to Dick Slater and his band of brave youths.

As soon as the British had surrendered, the patriots began to scatter, and plunder the camp, as was their right according to the rules of warfare, and while they were thus engaged Dick Slater, who was keeping a sharp lookout in all directions, saw a British force coming on the double-quick, and sounded the alarm.

"Another British force is coming," he cried; "to arms, everybody! It is a strong force, and we will have all we can do to fight it off."

Colonel Stark issued orders rapidly, and soon the patriots were ready for the new enemy.

While Colonels Stark and Warner were getting the men in readiness for the engagement with the new enemy, Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" were not idle.

The youth had seen a stone fence at the farther side of the encampment, and he and his comrades hastened across and hid behind the fence.

"We will give them a surprise when they come up in range of our muskets," said Dick, and the youths nodded their heads in assent.

The redcoats were coming on the double-quick. They were the reinforcements that had been sent by Burgoyne, at Colonel Baum's request, he having sent a messenger back for the purpose, and they were eager to attack the "rebels" and turn the tables on them.

At the head of the force rode Lieutenant-Colonel Breyman, a brave officer, and he was urging his men to do their best, as he feared his friend, Colonel Baum, had met with defeat.

Closer and closer came the British. Dick was watching them closely. When they were well within musket-shot distance, Dick gave the signal.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" rose up from behind the stone wall and poured a deadly volley into the ranks of the redcoats.

The British recoiled, but only for an instant; then Colonel Breyman shouted out an order for his men to charge, and they came forward with a rush.

"Fire, 'Liberty Boys'!" cried Dick; "give them two volleys from the pistols."

The youths did as ordered, and poured two volleys into the ranks of the enemy at close range.

So close were the British, indeed, that the pistols did quite as great damage as muskets would have done, and many of the redcoats went down, never to rise again.

The British fired a volley as they came up, but the "Liberty Boys" had anticipated this, and dropped behind the stone fence in time to escape most of the bullets. None of the youths were killed, though several were wounded.

At this moment a lot more of the patriots came up and made a stand at the stone fence.

Colonels Stark and Warner had seen its value as a breast-work, and had ordered the men to advance and take up their position there.

The result was that the main engagement between the two forces took place here, and this time, as in the first battle, the "Liberty Boys" were right in the front in the affair.

They were undaunted, however, and fought with desperate energy. They put in their best blows, and these were sufficient to cause the enemy to recoil.

Still, the Germans were veterans, and were not to be beaten easily, and they fought with desperate energy.

They were outnumbered so greatly that they could not hold their own, however, and they soon learned that a portion of the patriot force was working around to engage them from the rear, and they fell back to another hill a quarter of a mile away.

Here they made another stand, and fought for three quarters of an hour.

Then, as the patriots were getting well around toward the rear of them, they took their position on the top of another hill half a mile away.

Here they made another stand, and it took an hour of hot work to dislodge them, and make them retreat again.

Colonel Breyman was a cool, and shrewd commander, and he knew it would be all up with his force if he permitted the patriots to get behind him, and cut off his retreat, so he retired each time he saw the enemy getting well around toward the sides of his own force.

This was kept up till evening, and so terrible had been the losses of the German force, through dead, wounded, and captured, that when darkness came on less than one hundred men were still hanging together.

Colonel Breyman realized that it was useless to try to fight longer, and so he told the men to follow him, and the remnant of his force stole away through the timber and darkness.

They succeeded in getting away before the patriots could get them surrounded, and right glad they were to get away.

The patriots were not long in discovering that the last remnant of the German force had given up the fight and slipped away, and as it was now dark they went into camp.

"In the morning we will see how the land lies," said Colonel Stark. "I think, however, that the British will make no further attempt to capture the supplies at Bennington."

CHAPTER X.

A TIMELY APPEARANCE.

Lieutenant-Colonel Breyman and about seventy men succeeded in making their escape in the darkness, and they made their way back to the main British encampment as rapidly as possible.

They reached there early in the morning, and tired as he was, Colonel Breyman went to the tent occupied by General Burgoyne in order to make his report.

The general had just breakfasted.

He looked up as Breyman entered.

He saw at once, from the look on the officer's face, that he was the bearer of bad news.

"What is it, colonel?" he exclaimed.

"I have come to report that we failed, general," was the reply.

"Failed?"

"Yes."

"Then you did not capture the supplies at Bennington?"

"No; we did not, in fact, get within five miles of Bennington."

"You were met by the enemy?"

"Yes."

"In force?"

"There must have been fifteen hundred."

General Burgoyne started and gave utterance to an exclamation of dismay and amazement.

"Fifteen hundred," he almost gasped.

"Yes."

"But you—how did you come out of the—engagement?"

Breyman shook his head.

"We came out in very bad shape, general," he said.

"You don't mean that they——"

"They had already beaten Baum, and had captured his entire force before I arrived on the scene, General Burgoyne."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes."

The British commander sank back, and stared at the speaker in a horrified manner.

"That is terrible—terrible," he murmured.

"You are right," coincided Breyman. "It is terrible, for a fact. And poor Baum, he is dead."

"Lieutenant-Colonel Baum dead?"

"Yes; he fell, and then his men surrendered."

"Too bad! Too bad!" General Burgoyne was almost overcome with grief.

"As soon as I appeared on the scene," went on Colonel Breyman, "I made an attack on the rebels, not knowing their strength, and was handled very roughly."

"They were too strong for you, also?"

"They were."

"But I don't understand it. I would have supposed that five hundred veterans like the men commanded by Baum, and by you, would have been more than a match for three times their number, when the enemy was made up of militia, green country fellows who know a great deal more about a pitchfork than about a sword."

"They were not all militia."

"They were not?"

"No; there were some men with them—about one hundred, I should say—who were equal to two or three hundred of the best soldiers."

"Who were they?"

"The 'Liberty Boys'!"

General Burgoyne started.

"Were they there?" he asked.

"They were."

"That accounts for the result of the battle, then," said the general. "With the 'Liberty Boys' to lead the way, and set the example, the militia would make a very good fight."

"You are right, general; and those farmers are splendid shots with the rifle. Every time they take aim at something something happens."

"But you succeeded in making your escape, I see, Colonel Breyman."

"Yes, general; I got away in company with about seventy of my men."

"Seventy!"

"Yes."

"You don't mean to say that you lost all your force save seventy?" almost gasped Burgoyne.

"Yes, general; and if darkness had not come on, even that number would not have escaped."

General Burgoyne was almost overcome with chagrin and rage.

"That is terrible," he murmured. "Who would have thought there were so many accursed rebels in these parts?"

"Oh, the woods are full of them, general."

"Yet Major Skene assured me that loyalists abound, and that they were waiting eagerly for a chance to enter the king's service."

"He must have been dreaming," with a scornful curl of the lips. "The woods are swarming with men anxious to get a chance to shoot British soldiers full of holes."

"It did not take Baum long to discover this, I judge, you know he sent back for reinforcements, which was the reason you were sent after him."

"I know."

"Poor Baum. He was a brave officer."

"So he was, general."

"Nearly one thousand of my best soldiers gone," murmured General Burgoyne, shaking his head sadly.

"It is bad, sir."

"It is terrible. And we failed to secure the supplies which we stood in great need of."

"So we did."

And I suppose it would be folly to try again to secure supplies?"

"I think so, sir, unless you move forward with your army."

"That I cannot well do, as it would be quite a good deal of the way."

Then the two had some further conversation, the colonel telling all about the affair, as far as he had knowledge of it.

"Well, it cannot be helped now," said General Burgoyne, in conclusion. "But it is a great—a terrible loss to be deprived of one thousand of my best men."

The British encampment was plunged in gloom when it became generally known that the two forces sent out by Burgoyne had met with such disaster.

Next morning, when Colonels Stark and Warner and Captain Dick Slater took stock of the result of the engagements of the day before, it was found that they had killed 700 of the British—killed and wounded, that is—and had captured 700. They had also captured 1,000 stand of arms, 1,000 dragoon swords, and 4 field-pieces.

Of the patriots only 1 had been killed, and 42 had been wounded, so it is easy to see that the German force got all the worst of it.

"We have done very well indeed," said Colonel Stark, in a tone of satisfaction.

"I should say so," remarked Colonel Warner.

"Yes, indeed," from Dick.

"Do you think there is any danger that Burgoyne will send another force, and make a second attempt to reach Bennington and capture the supplies?" asked Stark.

Warner and Dick both looked thoughtful, and then the colonel turned to the youth, and said:

"What do you think about it, Dick? You have a better knowledge regarding this than I can have."

The youth hesitated, and then said slowly:

"Of course, it is impossible to say of a certainty, but I fully think that he will make a second attempt. This one has been too costly."

Stark nodded.

"That is what I think," he said; "if Bennington was in the line of march he might make the attempt, with his entire force to make it likely of success, but as it is off his line of march it is my opinion that he will give it up, and send another force to meet the fate of the two he has already sent."

The prisoners, arms, etc., were taken to Bennington, and Colonel Warner and his regiment and Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" set out for Manchester, to rejoin the patriot force under General Lincoln.

Tom Morgan, who had gone through the engagements in safety, went with the "Liberty Boys," and when they came to the point nearest the cabin in the woods where his sweetheart, Amy Boswick, and her parents were staying, he bade the youths good-by and made his way to the cabin.

The Indian, Ramonee, was absent, but the three white people were there, and they were very glad to see Tom.

"Oh, I am so glad that you are back again, alive and well, Tom," said Amy.

"Are you, little girl?" he remarked, a pleased light in his eyes.

"Yes, indeed."

"What luck did you have in the encounter with the British, Tom?" asked Mr. Boswick, who was considerably improved, he being much stronger and brighter than when Tom was there before.

"We thrashed them soundly, Mr. Boswick," the youth said, his face lighting up with enthusiasm.

"I am glad of that."

"We not only thrashed them, but we practically killed, wounded, and captured all of them."

"That is better," in a tone of satisfaction.

Then Tom told the whole story, the three listening with interest. He had just finished when the door suddenly opened, and into the cabin leaped the Indian, Ramonee.

He closed the door and barred it, and then nodded a greeting to Tom.

"How?" he said. "White boy got back?"

"Yes, Ramonee, back again. But what is the matter?"

"Bad white men chase Ramonee," was the reply.

"Bad white men?"

"Ugh. Man—name Jenks—bad white man—Tory; ugh."

"How many men has he with him?"

"Eight, mebbey nine."

"And they were after you?"

"Ugh. Try ketch Injun. Yell fur him to stop; Ramonee no stop, an' then bad white men shoot with muskets an' pistols."

"Did they wound you?"

"No hit Ramonee. They no good shooters."

Just then there came a knock on the door, and a hoarse voice called out:

"Open the door."

"Bad white men better go 'way," replied Ramonee.

"Bah. Open the door, I tell you."

"You had better get away from here," called out Tom. "We give you fair warning."

"Bah! I know you, Tom Morgan," came back the reply,

"and I don't care anything for your threats. Open the door."

"And let you murder us, eh?"

"We want that Indian."

"You will have to keep on wanting, then, for you won't get him."

"We'll show you."

"Oh, you will?"

"Yes; if you don't open the door we'll break it down."

"So that's what you'll do?"

"Yes; and if we have to go to that trouble it will go hard with you, Tom Morgan."

"I'll risk it. If you break the door down it will go hard with you fellows."

"Bah! Open the door, or down it goes!"—thump, thump, thump!

Before Tom or Ramonee could reply there came the sound of musket-shots and loud yells, and then the shuffle of feet as their owners hastened to get away from the vicinity.

"Bad white men skeered an' runnin' way," said Ramonee, and leaping to the door, he unbarred and opened it. He was outside at a bound, and sure enough the little party of Tories were running away with all their might.

The Indian hastily fitted an arrow to the bow-string, and discharged it instantly. It did not seem as if he had tried to make an accurate shot, but it was accurate nevertheless, for the leader of the Tories, Sanford Jenks, threw up his arms and fell to the ground dead, an arrow in his heart.

"Ugh!" grunted Ramonee in a satisfied way; "that finish chief of bad white men, an' the res' scatter an' run 'way, an' no git togedder ag'in."

"I guess you have settled him for good and all, Ramonee," said Tom.

"Me think so."

Then the two turned to see who had been instrumental in putting the Tories to flight, and saw that it was Dick Slater and a dozen of his "Liberty Boys."

"Hello, Tom; how are you, Ramonee?" said Dick, with a smile.

"How?" remarked Ramonee. "Injun glad to see white brother."

"And I'm glad to see you, Ramonee," was the reply.

"How happens it that you came here, Dick?" asked Tom. "I supposed you were far away, on the road to Manchester."

"I'll tell you how it happened, Tom. I saw the Tories pursuing Ramonee, and set out in pursuit of the scoundrels, in company with a dozen of my boys. We followed them to this place, and—you know the rest."

"Well, you got here just in time; they were going to break the door down."

"I'm glad we were in time to put them to flight before they could do any damage."

"There is one of their number who will never do any more damage, Dick," with a grim smile. "He is Sanford Jenks. Ramonee put an arrow through him, and he lies over there at the edge of the timber."

"Well, he deserved his fate. It is a good thing he is dead for it will break up his band, and the settlers in these parts may now sleep in peace, without fear of being plundered or perhaps murdered."

"You are right. And now, Dick, come in the house. I wish to introduce some one to your notice."

The youth leaped down and entered the cabin with Tom who introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Boswick and Amy. The three greeted Dick pleasantly, and the youth gave Tom a playful nudge, as he said:

"I think I understand matters, old fellow. Well, I wish you long life and happiness when you are man and wife."

Amy blushed, as did Tom also. "Thank you, Dick," he said earnestly. "There is one thing I can say always, and that is that I am proud to know that I once fought with the 'Liberty Boys,' and was one of them for a few days."

After some further conversation Dick bade good-by to Tom and the Boswicks, and with Ramonee as well, and mounting his horse rode away in company with the "Liberty Boys."

In speaking of the battle at Bennington afterward, the "Liberty Boys" often said that they put in their best blow there, and it was largely due to this fact that the British had been beaten.

THE END.

The next number (95) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS IN NEW JERSEY; OR, BOXING THE EARS OF THE BRITISH LION," by Harry Moore.

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